

Conclusions and Recommendations

The specificity of the historical determinants of the development of Cieszyn Silesia leads us to the conclusion that it should be the perfect area for Euroregional cooperation. However, the problems resulting from the division of the territory of Silesia after World War I, including, first of all, differences in economic development, national antagonisms, and even a sense of injustice on both sides of the border, have proven to be difficult to overcome.

The history of this region since the Middle Ages seems to indicate its significant cohesion in terms of territory, economy, and ethnicity, as well as the shared history. The vicissitudes of history concerned the entire Duchy of Cieszyn – the transition from the rule of the Polish princes to the Czech rule, from the power of the Silesian Piasts to Habsburg sovereignty, did not substantially contribute to any territorial changes. This cohesion lasted until the mid-nineteenth century, and was disturbed by the growing ethnic disputes that escalated into a conflict concerning the political affiliation of Cieszyn Silesia, which ended in its division. The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the rise – on its ruins – of new states led to the division of the former Duchy of Cieszyn between Poland and Czechoslovakia. This division survived the interwar period (with a notable episode in 1938, when Polish troops entered Zaolzie) and was maintained after the Second World War by the Polish-Czechoslovak Treaty on Friendship and Mutual Cooperation of 10 March 1947.

The economic processes taking place in the Duchy of Cieszyn also concerned the entire territory of the duchy. The evolution from serfdom-based farm economy to the birth of modern agriculture, and from the beginnings of industrial production (manufactures producing liqueurs, cloth, and leather products) to the development of the textile industry, mining, metallurgy, and chemical industry also encompassed the whole duchy. The balanced economic development was facilitated by Austrian, and then Austro-Hungarian policy – the expansion of the network of rail and road transport created opportunities for the development of industry all over Silesia. The

division of that territory between Poland and Czechoslovakia meant the partition of a single, coherent economic area. Several decades of Cieszyn Silesia's belonging to other states led to the disappearance of economic relations within the area, and to the emergence of considerable disparities in the level of economic development. In the areas incorporated into Czechoslovakia, the economic changes were, in fact, much more dynamic than it was the case with those under the Polish rule.

In terms of ethnicity, Silesia remained a relatively uniform area until the end of the eighteenth century. In medieval sources, the population of the area was referred to as the Polonia, and even the medieval settlement under the German law – connected with the influx of people from outside Silesia – did not change the region's ethnic structure – the settlers most often underwent Polonization. It was only in modern times that representatives of the nobility and bourgeoisie from Bohemia and Moravia began to settle in the Duchy of Cieszyn, but they did not constitute a large group. When the Habsburgs took over the duchy, the influx of settlers of German origin increased – they were mostly officials and landowners. Major changes were not introduced until the nineteenth century – the rapidly growing industry of Cieszyn Silesia demanded greater population resources than were available, so the inflow of workers from outside Silesia (mostly Poles from Galicia) became necessary. The rise of national consciousness and the process of shaping nationalistic attitudes, taking place in Cieszyn Silesia since the beginning of the nineteenth century, led to the process of national identification of the inhabitants of Silesia (as Poles, Czechs, Germans, or as Silesians), which was also reflected in the preference for particular countries. Disputes between the supporters of different parties led to the development of numerous national antagonisms between the inhabitants, and the division of Cieszyn Silesia only perpetuated the existing problem.

The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion was founded on April 22, 1998, based on the regional cooperation agreement signed by the Association for the Development and Regional Cooperation "Olza", with its seat in Cieszyn, and the Cieszyn Silesia Regional Association for the Czech-Polish Cooperation, with its seat in Český Těšín. Under this agreement, both parties set up joint decision-making and executive bodies, and committed to the development of cross-border cooperation. The boundaries of this cooperation are, however, determined by the internal law of Poland and the Czech Republic. The Euroregion bodies are interstate ones. There are, however, no supranational bodies. The activities of the Euroregion bodies cannot violate the sovereignty of either state. These bodies are the Council and the Secretariat. While the Council is the decision-making body, the Secretariat serves as the executive body. The Council is made up of twelve members, delegated on a parity basis by each of the parties, six for Poland and six for the Czech Republic. Resolutions are adopted exclusively by the Council as the decision-making body. At the same time, the Council makes decisions unanimously, with a quorum of at least 50% of the members. Other legal instruments adopted by the Council are positions and recommendations. The Secretariat consists of two secretaries and their deputies. However, they run separate offices of the Secretariat, serving administrative functions. Working groups can operate in concert with

the Secretariat: such groups are appointed by the Council. They are not, however, included in the bodies of the Euroregion.

The most important achievements of Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion's activities in the analyzed period, i.e. the years 1998-2011, include the management of small projects and micro-projects of pre-accession and post-accession assistance of the European Union; the Euroregion was very active in the field of tourism, environmental protection, and road infrastructure, as well as cultural cooperation, education, and sports. The weak points in the functioning of the Euroregion during the analyzed period included economic and trade cooperation, entrepreneurship, crisis management, cooperation in the field of spatial planning, as well as overcoming historical prejudices and stereotypes.

The cross-border cooperation within Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion meets at least ten of the thirteen criteria of integration (about 77%) as defined in the theories of neofunctionalism and interdependence. This means that the Euroregion has considerable potential for further enhancement of integration, although it does not make use of the entirety of that potential. Despite the fact that there are still differences in the economic potentials between the Czech and the Polish part of the Euroregion, which even increased after 1 May 2004 (leaving the Polish portion a little behind), both parts of the Euroregion have similar rates of economic growth (mainly the GDP *per capita*, unemployment rate and labour migration balance), as well as similar economic and population structures. There is also a significant economic and social cohesion within the Euroregion, which undoubtedly is a significant benefit of integration. The political elites, influencing directly the process of Euroregional integration, are mutually compatible. Also, there are strong interest groups supporting the integration policies of the Polish and Czech governments. The domestic political stability in both countries provides a stronger sense of identification of the communities of both parts of the Euroregion with the integration policies of their respective governments.

On the other hand, the favourable conditions for the development of cross-border trade and economic cooperation between the companies of the Euroregion are still not fully utilized, which results from both the specific features of the local economy, and an insufficient interest in the issue on the part of the local authorities. Consequently, the community of functional interests (i.e. the interrelationships and dependencies between the economies on both sides of the border) within the Euroregion is not particularly strong. These is a result, among other things, of the asymmetry in the number of large businesses. In the Czech portion of the Euroregion this number is almost twice as high as in the Polish portion. Additionally, the Euroregion has a number of options to "export" the costs of integration. The effectiveness of the integration policies of both Polish and Czech governments, which should be regarded as significant, is negatively influenced by the euro-scepticism of the Czech community of the Euroregion. This is not compensated for by the euro-optimism of the Polish community of the Euroregion. There is also little compatibility among the structures of state and local government administration of the states that comprise

the Euroregion. In addition, the process of cross-border cooperation is still negatively affected by significant historical prejudices on both sides of the border.

The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is an excellent example of a European region where transformations of social identity are taking place, along with changes in the sense of belonging and alienation, and the development of public awareness. This region has a rich history, which has not been free from conflicts – still present in the minds of many people. The historical and cultural heritage and the memory of it are an important dimension of contemporary changes in the Euroregion. The new European framework of reference give a new meaning to those changes. Thus a need was born for research aimed at looking more closely at the processes taking place in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion from the perspective of social consciousness. The main point of that research was not to determine what is actually happening in the Euroregion, but rather to examine how those processes of change are perceived and interpreted by the local population.

The basis of the analyses and conclusions were interviews conducted in 2011 among the residents of the Euroregion. The interviews had an in-depth, semi-structured character, and the respondents had been selected in such a way that the sample included both the so-called “ordinary people” of both sexes and of all ages, as well as those responsible for the development of the Euroregion and shaping the awareness of its inhabitants. The key concept for our considerations was identity. It can be argued that collective identity, especially with regard to such regional communities, can be built in one of two ways. It can be an identity of the ethnic type – based on common culture and the belief in a common origin, or a civic identity – based on activity for the common good of the community and a willingness to contribute to it. The first type of identity is quite closed, focused on the past, clearly distinguishing between ‘countrymen’ and ‘foreigners’, primarily on the basis of their cultural characteristics and origin. This type appreciates tradition, is conservative and collectivist. It hinders mobility, both in terms of emigration and immigration. The key factor is the origin: of coming from ‘here’ as opposed to ‘out there’. The second type of identity looks to the future, does not ask: “Where are you from?” but rather: “What would you like to do and what can you do for the common good of the community?” ‘Our fellow countrymen’ are those people who, together with us, create the community and region, share our values and principles, even if they do not necessarily come ‘from here’. They are, first and foremost, good citizens. This type of identity is more open, inclusive, and individualistic. It promotes mobility and can be easily reconciled with other dimensions of identity, which is especially important in a world where we can enter into increasingly complicated relations with one another. One has to remember that identity is contextual, constructed in relation to other people who are our “significant others”. Today, each of us has multiple identities. We ask ourselves whether those identities can be reconciled, or if we need to choose between them. In the case of the civic identity, the reconciliation of several different identities, such as national, regional, and European ones, is easier; but in the case of the ethnic identity there often is a dramatic choice to be made. At the same time, we note that identity

is becoming increasingly blurred, and at the same time it becomes more and more a matter of individual choice.

In the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion those are the everyday dilemmas. It is a Euroregion with a distinct, traditional culture, and well-defined “significant others”. The attachment to tradition is clearly visible, along with the old loyalties and borders. At the same time, there are modernization and integration processes taking place, which affect the identity of the people and are reflected in their consciousness. The Euroregion’s history is largely one of the struggles of religious identities, which also mostly dominated the national relations. The Protestant population of the region associated their religion with the Polish identity, having as their “significant other” the economically and politically dominant Catholics. In the free Poland, the religious identity of the Protestants could result in their alienation from the Polish nation, as the majority of Poles tended to identify Polishness with Roman Catholicism. As a result, the people of Cieszyn retreated to their regional enclave, cultivating their own customs and religion.

Our research showed, first and foremost, a change that involves the gradual transition from a religion-dominated regional identity, closely linked to the national theme of the ethnic type, towards a much more autonomous regional identity which begins to play a dominant role, sometimes merging with a more civil type of national identity. It is a fact widely known in the Euroregion that the most important criterion for regional affiliation is currently the question of whether a person is “s tela” – meaning “from around here”, a local. This type of origin seems to be more important than religion, because those “s tela” include both Catholics and Protestants. This can be interpreted as a response to the increased mobility. The boundaries between the fellow countrymen and the foreigners used to be relatively constant. Nowadays, with the influx of people from the outside, it appears that the boundaries between the ‘locals’ and the ‘newcomers’ are the most significant ones, bringing the most order to the social world. The interviews conducted strongly support the hypothesis of the growing importance of regional identity at the expense of religious and national identities. Those interviewed considered the cultural heritage of Cieszyn Silesia as particularly important – more so than the national heritage. The Polish-Czech border, although it still has meaning, is no longer a border stemming from and giving rise to conflict, and its role has been reduced, while the mutual interaction and better knowledge of one another is flourishing. It can be said that there currently exist three groups of inhabitants in Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion: the Poles, the Czechs and the Zaolzie people (belonging culturally to the Polish nation, but Czech citizens). The Zaolzie people are the most conservative group, very attached to traditionally understood (in ethnic terms) Polish culture. Within the younger generation, this type of identity is increasingly being challenged, and there emerges a new type, combining the respect for Polish cultural heritage with a desire to be a good citizen of the region and the Czech state. Religion is gradually losing its importance as a major determinant of identity in the Euroregion. The European identity, however, is only budding. Europe appears in our interviews as a positive reference, and the direction of development towards

European values of pluralism and multiculturalism is also seen as a good thing. The Euroregion, however, is generally not well known and not associated with any major projects carried out in Cieszyn Silesia.

Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is currently in the process of creating a new identity for itself – one less associated with religion and more with a sense of belonging to the place. It is therefore still a type of ethnic identity, traditional, exclusivist and collectivist. Openness and integration processes on the European scale have created an opportunity for the revival of the regional identity. One can also notice signs of the region's opening up, and the creation of the civic identity within national communities and the European community. At the same time, there is no contradiction between the regional identity of the civic type and similarly constructed identities at the national or supranational levels.

Cieszyn Silesia has always been extremely diverse in terms of ethnicity, and as a region it has had a long-standing tradition of co-existence of different nationalities. The legal position of minorities inhabiting the region is determined by international legal standards developed in the twentieth century. These are the standards of both global and regional scope. Among the latter, one should mention the legal output of the Council of Europe, in particular Article 14 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of 1991, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1995, which lays down the general principles of the protection of minority rights, leaving the states the right to choose ways and means to implement them. Also, the documents developed by the CSCE / OSCE, despite their political character, are an important step towards setting the direction of the development of the protection of European minority rights. The European Union laws have also been a significant contribution in this area.

In the field of protection of minority rights there are also important bilateral treaties and the domestic legislation of individual countries, reflecting to the greatest extent the value that a state places on the national minorities inhabiting it. The domestic legislation of the Czech Republic and Poland also guarantee the rights of national minorities. An important document on the rights of minorities is the Agreement between the Polish Republic and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic on Good Relations, Solidarity, and Friendly Cooperation, Article 8 of which grants the possibility to exercise their rights to the representatives of the Polish minority, including the free use of their mother tongue, to receive information in that language, to freely develop their own culture, have their own organizations and associations, as well as the right to education in their native language, and the right to political representation. In Zaolzie, there are no restrictions on the use of the mother tongue in private life. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Poland provides financial support geared towards the publication of periodicals in Polish.

The most ethnically diverse districts of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion are Frýdek-Místek and Karviná. The Czech majority, the Polish minority (indigenous), the Slovak minority (with over 50 years of tradition), and a number of less numerous

other national minorities coexist side by side here. The decreasing number of people on both the Czech and Polish side is a continuing trend. The multicultural history of the region has had an impact on the diversity of the collective identity of the inhabitants of the borderland – it is a complex, heterogeneous phenomenon, constantly reconstructed under the influence of the socio-cultural processes within the area. It is the result of the region's past, as well as the regional and global processes of the contemporary world that affected it. Therefore, today's identity is multidimensional and seems more fluid, as the impact of heritage and tradition decreases to a certain extent, and the mobility of people increases – freeing them, as it were, from the relatively homogeneous communities in which standards were passed down from generation to generation. As a result of globalization, we can observe a loosening of the traditional bonds – but in return, locality emerges as a way of organizing the diverse meanings connected to a particular place.

The Schengen Agreement, which Poland and the Czech Republic entered into on December 21, 2007, gave the border a symbolic character. The opening up of borders has intensified integration processes and revived cross-border cooperation, at the same time unleashing new forms of entrepreneurship both on the Polish and the Czech side. Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion aims to eliminate the barriers to the development of cross-border cooperation. Such obstacles will not disappear. Their removal requires not only effort, but also time – in order to bring about a situation in which cooperation can develop freely. Removing barriers, however, requires close coordination between the governments and local governments, as only the joint commitment of the social, political, and government forces can facilitate efficient cooperation. The future of individuals and the whole community of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is still influenced by its history, its newly rediscovered multiculturalism, and its heritage. The activation of the resources of the past, turning them into a living heritage of contemporary times, is one of the ideas underlying the modern regionalism; therefore, it is important to build relations dominated by open attitudes. A historically-shaped regional identity can contribute to addressing the joint transformation of relations into a more constructive, permanent, and complete mutual understanding.

The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is also an interesting area for researchers involved in cultural heritage. The surveys and interviews conducted led us to the conclusion that – despite the incomplete knowledge of the applicable legal regulations in Poland, especially those arising from international conventions, but also acts of domestic law – both the local authorities and the residents of Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion attach great importance to the cultural heritage and engage in various activities in line with the international and national laws. It is a very interesting finding, indeed, as the elaborate definitions of cultural heritage contained in international conventions are somehow accepted intuitively, regardless of the knowledge of the legal norms. They correspond to the latest international regulations adopted at the global level (UN-ESCO conventions) as well as the European level (Council of Europe conventions).

Cultural heritage – in the opinion of the local authorities and non-governmental organizations, associations and residents of Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion – is under-

stood as including not only the material heritage (monuments, architectural layout of Cieszyn, and crafts), but also intangible assets, such as regional customs and traditions, the Cieszyn dialect, costumes, songs, regional cuisine, and multi-denominationalism, ecumenism, religious tolerance, and – finally – the landscape and monuments. The protection of that heritage is an important task for contemporary people in order to be able to pass those values on to the future generations. It can also be said that there is an awareness that the cultural heritage of the region is part of the Polish heritage, but also the common heritage of neighbouring nations and ethnic and religious groups, and thus part of the European heritage as an element of the heritage of mankind as a whole.

The comparison of the results of surveys and information obtained from respondents with the demands contained in the twenty points of the UNESCO Action Plan, annexed to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, allows us to conclude that – in the appropriate proportions, adequate to the local conditions – the UNESCO recommendations are being implemented to a large extent. However, in this context it is difficult to accept the critical comments of the respondents with regard to – in their opinion – the low level of education on the issues of regional cultural heritage and the need to develop a coherent strategy for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in order to facilitate the continuation of the initiatives undertaken. Such a way of thinking bodes well for the future.

The research conducted in Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, concerning the transformation and development of the education and cooperation of young people, modified the perspective from which one should look at the area and its inhabitants. The studies were to help determine the perception of the current state of affairs by the people of the Euroregion, and to trace the direction of changes in the educational development of local identity, teaching the local and regional history, the understanding of citizenship, the concept of patriotism, cooperation among young people and schools, as well as the use of EU funds for educational projects to build a sense of community within the Euroregion. The analysis of the Core Curriculum for Preschool Education and General Education in particular types of schools showed that formal education in Poland implements the European education policy objectives in a modern fashion, and pays particular attention to the patriotic and civic education. However, it is true that education in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion faces numerous obstacles on both sides of the border. The specific perception of one's own history and of Polish patriotism gives rise to stereotypes and prejudices, and makes it difficult to fight such stereotypes. Poles in the Czech part of the Euroregion often emphasized the sense of a kind of cultural backwardness. The dynamics of everyday life, and current local or personal problems, push back the attitude of thinking in terms of searching for similarities and common cultural elements on which to build a common, new and improved cross-border reality.

The understanding by the people of tradition, identity, and promotion of the Euroregion is dominated by folklore and elements of romanticized history. It is definitely easier to tell the people of the Euroregion of the elements which differentiate

the communities living on both sides of the border, rather than to identify the common elements. The respondents were quite critical in their assessment of the scope of cooperation between educational institutions aimed at learning more about and getting to know the local student and non-student communities and their specificity. Educational projects funded by the European Union (mainly within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme), with a view to the inter-school exchange and cultural, social, and educational exploration, often ended in failure due to the low attractiveness for students of the border areas. The main activity of schools, according to the respondents, was focused around sports events (such as matches and local-level Olympic games), cultural and traditional events (such as fairs and festivals of songs), and environmental ones (including the revitalization of the natural environment). Although they were directed to the community of the Euroregion (rather than the local and national communities), they were organized separately on both sides of the border.

The research showed that stereotypes are still alive in the mutual perception of the people of the Czech and Polish portions of the Euroregion (both Poles and Czechs living in the area): the sense of a lower value, of being lost in a reality full of transformations taking place under the influence of the European integration, as well as the desire to preserve “what was before”. The sense of alienation that the respondents indicated reinforced the need to preserve their national and local identity (being the people “from around here”, or belonging to the groups at various levels of being “settled in” «the so-called “pnioki” – “stumps” or “krzoki” – “bushes”»), and the continuous search for an enemy to fight. Multiethnicity, multiculturalism, and multi-denominationalism were inhibitory factors, obstacles to educational activities, and sources of strife, rather than values in themselves, representing the richness of the Euroregion. However, the cultural and religious diversity was marginalized by teachers, and interpreted in terms of history, presented as “school knowledge” as the *status quo*, which was not to be discussed, and the “difficult historical moments” blocked constructive discussion. The lack of connection between school knowledge and everyday reality did not help students in the development of a new European and cross-border perspective on their place in the world.

According to research, there are schools and teachers in Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion trying to – in a modern and constructive way – utilize of the wealth of cultural and religious heritage of the border regions, to initiate the actual cross-border cooperation, and to build an active society – aware of common roots, similarities and differences, wishing to take an active part in building a common future. There is still much to be done within the area of the conscious and planned educational activities for the benefit of the Euroregion. This applies to both initiatives of the local and central authorities, as well as measures taken by the social partners, teachers, parents, and students themselves.

The Polish-Czech bilateral cross-border cooperation in civil matters has a long tradition. Already in the 1920s there existed specific international agreements constituting a range of solutions to facilitate civil and legal relations. At present, the con-

tract for legal aid of 1987 is still in force, but a number of its provisions lost their significance in connection with the Polish and Czech accession to the European Union in 2004. The contract remains a very interesting basis for the evaluation of the effectiveness of foreign operations (in terms of the formal aspects), as well as the abolition of verification mechanisms between the parties.

Since the accession of Poland and the Czech Republic to the European Union in 2004, there also increased the frequency of submission before a Polish / Czech notary public of documents (particularly, the power of attorney documents) deriving, respectively, from the Czech Republic and Poland, and the purchase of real estate in the Euroregion by citizens of the Czech Republic and Poland. Cases were not uncommon, in the light of the above-mentioned practices, where Polish notaries, despite the specific requirements as to the form of foreign operations, were presented by the parties with documents in the Czech notarial form rather than in the form of a Polish notarial deed. The form resulting *ex lege loci actus*, should not, of course, be accepted, as it is ineffective in the light of art. 35 of the contract on legal aid. In practice, however, mistakes in this area are still quite common, and national courts (particularly Land and Mortgage Register courts) apply the provisions of international agreements, including the above-mentioned contract, correctly only in absolutely unique situations – despite the growing, but still slight awareness of the existence of the Act on international private law.

In general, the geographical, cultural, and linguistic proximity between Poland and the Czech Republic is a limiting factor in the use of powers of attorney in the legal circulation of both countries. Paradoxically, therefore, in the bilateral relations in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, the frequency of the use in operations involving a foreign element the powers of attorney from, the Czech Republic and Poland may be smaller than in the areas further away from the border. This is due to the fact that the proximity of areas often results in personal appearance for notarial acts. On the other hand, the knowledge of the law of the neighbouring country among notaries public should be much greater than in areas further away from the border. The powers of attorney issued within the area of Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, where the Polish minority is a large part of the population, and obtaining information on the Polish law is not a problem, are probably less formally defective (and therefore comply with the formal requirements of Polish law as *legis rei sitae* and prepared as deeds), as compared to similar documents issued in other parts of the Czech Republic.

The mutual, continuously increasing fondness among the two nations is a very significant factor – it will undoubtedly stimulate both increased personal contacts and the economy. The complementarity of the two national markets will be gradually increased. The cross-border acquisition of real estate for commercial purposes, as well as individual needs of the citizens will continue to gain popularity, provided that the economic crisis does not intensify in this part of Europe. It therefore seems particularly important to deepen the knowledge of the regulations and notarial practices between legal professionals in both neighbouring countries. This applies in particular to notaries public, as a kind of outpost of legal transactions with foreign countries.

The statistic research conducted by us on the social and economic cohesion of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion entitles us to put forward a thesis that the cohesion is quite substantial. This thesis is justified by similar natural conditions (geographical and physical) of development. The common heritage of the historical past – on both sides of the border, in the areas which constituted the historic core of Cieszyn Silesia – is not without significance. However, their later belonging to two states – different in terms of socio-economic development – was undoubtedly important for the diverse dynamics of development of the Polish and Czech parts of the Euroregion. The existing differences in the level of development, however, are much smaller in the case of the two portions of the Euroregion than in the case of entire countries, due to the fact that the Moravian-Silesian region holds a slightly lower rate of growth than the average for the Czech Republic, and Silesia belongs to the group of the most developed regions in Poland. What can be worrying is the increasing development gap between Poland and the Czech Republic in the period analyzed. This trend is even more pronounced in the case of the Moravian-Silesian region and the province of Silesia (over the last 10 years, the gap increased by 4 and 8 percentage points, respectively).

The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion consists of a total of 59 municipalities, 16 of which belong to the Polish municipality of Silesia (unit NUTS II), and within it to the sub-region of Bielsko and Rybnik (units NUTS III). The historical core of Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion – on the Polish side – is made up of all the municipalities of the district of Cieszyn (12) and 2 municipalities of the district of Bielsko (respectively the LAU 1 – districts, and LAU 2 – municipalities). The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion includes two other municipalities, outside the historic area of Cieszyn Silesia, namely – the rural municipality of Godów in the district of Wodzisław, and the city of Jastrzębie Zdrój, with the status of an independent city district. When it comes to the 43 Czech municipalities, they are part of the Moravian-Silesian region (representing at the same time the territorial subdivision: NUTS II and III), divided into six districts (LAU 1). More specifically – on the Czech side – the Euroregion consists of 16 municipalities of the district of Karviná (with the exception of the municipality of Horní Bludovice), and 27 municipalities of the borderland part of the Frýdek-Místek district.

Statistical information gathered from municipalities gave rise to the formulation of conclusions concerning the demographic trends and age structure of the population in both parts of Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion. Overall, in both countries and both analyzed parts of the Euroregion – despite the seemingly different indicators – we are dealing with unfavourable demographic evolution, reflected in the population projections. According to Eurostat data for 2030, the ageing of the population will continue in both countries; in Poland it will take place more quickly than in the Czech Republic, where the population will stabilize at a level similar to the present one, but it will be reduced in the Moravian-Silesian region. In Poland, however, the population level is expected to decline until 2030 by more than 2 million people, with a reduction by more than 300 thousand residents in the Silesian province alone. This

will change the demographic dependency ratio (persons older than the working age), from the currently more favourable one in the border districts of Poland, and its increase as compared with the districts of the Moravian-Silesian region.

It should be noted, however, that when conducting research on economic and social cohesion, the only comparable information possible to obtain was related to unemployment and housing conditions of the population. Statistical information from other areas were impossible to obtain in the form of comprehensive, comparable data (i.e. the same variables, arranged in the same cross-section for the same time periods in the Czech and Polish portions of the Euroregion). When it comes to the labour market – with the exception of the district of Karviná – the unemployment rates were different, though comparable on both sides of the border. In 2009, however, it decreased in two districts in Poland, and further increased in the Czech Republic, with Karviná having double-digit unemployment levels. It is supposed that this fact was associated with the consequences of the global economic crisis, the results of which strongly affected the Czech economy (while Poland managed to avoid recession). According to Eurostat data of 2009, real GDP decreased in the Czech Republic by 4.1%, and in the Moravian-Silesian region alone by more than 7%.

The data collected also helped to establish similarities between the housing conditions of the population, reflected by a similar number of flats per thousand inhabitants (respectively 338 and 367 in the Polish and the Czech portions), and a similar standard of their equipment and furnishing. The only significant difference is the average size of dwelling floor area (90.8 m² on the Polish side, and only 57.6 m² on the Czech side) and the size of the property attributable to one person (respectively 30.4 m² in Poland and 18.4 m² in the Czech Republic). It should be noted that the observation formulated for Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion in the publication of the Statistical Office in Wrocław in 2006 it is still valid – it concerned the fact that “the inhabitants of the Czech part possessed more flats per 1,000 people,” while “flats in the Polish portion had a much larger floor space”.

The accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, and other Central European countries to the European Union also had a significant impact on their trade. The inclusion into the single market changed the conditions of trade with EU Member States, and common trade and agricultural policies led to a change in the terms of trade with third countries. Changes in the Polish-Czech economic and commercial cooperation were also determined by factors related to the activities conducted in the Euroregions, operating in the Czech-Polish borderlands, including the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion.

The analysis of the statistical data on the indicators relating to the formation of commercial ties between Poland and the Czech Republic leads to three main conclusions. Firstly, in the period prior to the accession to the European Union (years 1993-2003), as a result of facilities introduced by the CEFTA agreement, the decline of mutual trade was initially halted, and then the trade increased. This trade accelerated at a rate much higher than their global trade, and their trade with the EU-15, but at a rate lower than with the CEFTA countries. At that time, the Czech Republic became one of the most important trading partners for Poland. Similar trends were also

visible at the time in the Czech Republic's foreign trade. Poland was the partner with whom trade was developed at a rate much higher not only in comparison to the global trade and trade with the EU-15, but also with the countries of CEFTA. Secondly, the Polish and Czech accession to the European Union meant a major revision of the rules and regulations of trade with all partners. The greatest changes concerned the relations with the new Member States (EU-10), especially with relation to food and agricultural goods. The Polish trade with the Czech Republic resulted in a significant acceleration of mutual trade, as compared with the pre-accession period, especially in the years 2004-2005. Throughout the analyzed period, that is, in the years 2004-2010, they increased at a faster rate than the global trade and the trade with the EU-15 and EU-10. It should be noted that the suppression of the Polish foreign trade in 2009, as a consequence of the global economic crisis was much less significant in the trade with the Czech Republic than in the global trade, and trade with the EU-15 and EU-10 countries. During that period, Poland was also a particularly important and attractive commercial partner for the Czech Republic. Export and import between the Czech Republic and Poland developed in this period at a rate much faster than was the case with the other groups of countries. In 2009, in turn, the decline of the trade with Poland was not as steep as in the case of the EU-15 or EU-10 countries, and in 2010 trade with Poland reached a slightly higher level than in 2008. Thirdly, the above-mentioned basic trends in the trade between Poland and the Czech Republic were also visible in the relations between the companies registered in the province of Silesia with their partners in the Czech Republic. In the absence of statistical data relating to the trading companies registered in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, the data on exports and imports between entities registered in the province of Silesia and their partners from all over the Czech Republic were used for the purposes of the analysis. It seems that the conclusions drawn from this analysis relatively largely overlap with the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data on companies registered in the Euroregion. Following this, one should assume that the favourable conditions for the development of cross-border trade and economic cooperation between companies of the Euroregion are still not being fully utilized. This is a consequence of the specific features of the economy of the Euroregion, and insufficient interest in these issues on the part of the local authorities.

The issues of broadly-understood transport have always been the focus of attention for the authorities of the Euroregion. This is understandable, as the geographical location of the Euroregion determined that there are important transport routes crossing the area, which are the focus for the European Union, individual states, and finally – the local communities. Examples of construction and development of important routes and hubs in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion show that progress has been significant. The development of road connections of strategic importance to transit has been a success; also, there have been developments in the construction and expansion of the railway network (although to a lesser extent) – with the exception of only a few routes and stations. The radical change in the situation, when it comes to transport routes, was brought about by the entry into force of the Schengen

Agreement for Poland and the Czech Republic on 21 December 2007. The removal of border controls was a classic “flight forward”, which has stimulated the border areas significantly. It’s not about facilities for large transit routes, it’s all about connecting the two areas in terms of local roads network according to the pragmatic rules for their use. The Schengen Agreement opened hitherto unknown possibilities of building bike trails, horseback riding trails, and connections on the rivers and canals, which are real, and not merely apparent, ways to break the barriers of communication and – as a result – bring people together. The new possibilities include not only the purely technical aspects of engineering, but also the possibility of launching a number of local initiatives that can result in a “big impact for a small price”.

The activation of the entire Euroregion – accelerated by the Schengen Agreement – strengthens the processes of cooperation regardless of the existing organizational and conceptual differences in Poland and the Czech Republic. The list of completed and implemented projects is long, and proves that both parties are able to recognize their own needs and the needs of the neighbour. It is all about the good use of the advantages, such as abundant natural assets, as well as the mountainous landscape of the region. It is also important to promote the Beskidy at the local and international level, as the mountain range is a common part of the two countries. The development of transport infrastructure, including the primary level (footpaths, bike trails) must be connected with the development of hotel and catering facilities – also seasonal. The benefits of the activities of Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion are particularly evident in the following areas: first, the increased access to the structural funds, i.e. for the promotion and development of tourism infrastructure in the Beskidy; secondly, the Beskidy were made more available to tourists as an area without borders, which also facilitated better movement of goods and services in the field of tourism; thirdly, the process of attracting investors has been a success; fourthly, the region appeared on the EU tourism market, and the international image of both countries was improved; fifthly, a coherent promotion management system for tourism was created; sixthly, there was a significant (though still not sufficient) development of transport and communication infrastructure. These are substantial and lasting foundations for further joint efforts and useful cooperation. On the other hand, it should be noted that there is still much work to be done in the field of airline and railway infrastructure and facilities in the region, which will most probably become a priority in the foreseeable future.

The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is an area of outstanding tourism values. This fact is chiefly determined by the region’s geography – the Beskidy mountain range, thanks to unique geological processes, is built of limestone, igneous rocks (picrobasalt), and sandstone. The part of the range on the Czech side includes the Moravian and Silesian Beskidy, and the Polish part includes the Silesian Beskidy and the Olza Valley. In this area there are deposits of coal and iron ore, as well as natural gas deposits. The territory of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is home to rich flora and fauna. There are even parts where the natural environment has survived almost unchanged. In addition to the great natural assets, Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion has an abundance

of historic monuments and sites, testifying to the complex past of these lands. Almost every town and village here offers tourists a chance to see comparatively well-preserved historic monuments. What is particularly worthy of note is the enormous diversity – there are Romanesque and Gothic buildings and churches, no shortage of Renaissance castles and palaces, a lot of baroque, classical, and Art Nouveau architecture. However, this richness of form and content forces us to reflect on the use it is put to. Certainly, much remains to be done. There is room for improvement when it comes to tourist information; the cultural heritage is all but forgotten by local inhabitants; there still persists the inability to raise funds for the development of tourism and – most importantly – ignorance of the potential that is presented by the cultural, civilisational, and natural heritage – those are the main ills of tourism in the Euroregion. The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is still a *terra incognita*, through which one passes quickly on the way to other regions of Poland or the Czech Republic. The lack of proper tourist signs, and the shortage of accommodation and parking spaces all require rapid changes. One of the impulses for taking action by its residents may come from proposals for the establishment of new tourist trails, tailored to the needs of the modern tourist. Therefore, we propose ten such potential routes:

I. The Monuments of the Middle Ages Route in Cieszyn Silesia

Route: the Gothic church of St. Stanislaus in Bielsko-Biala – the settlement in Stare Bielsko – the castle in Grodziec – the Gołężyców settlement in Międzyzwieć – Cieszyn: the parish church, the castle tower – the settlement in Kocobędz – Hukvaldy Castle – Olomouc Cathedral.

II. The Medieval Cities Route of Cieszyn Silesia

Bielsko: the main market square, the relics of the town hall, the old town layout – Stare Bielsko: settlement, church of St. Stanislaus – Strumień: old town layout – Skoczów: old town layout, Kaplicówka, parish church, the town hall – Cieszyn: main market square, parish church, castle and borough system – Bohumín: parish church, main market square – Frýdek-Místek: castle, main market square, remains of medieval buildings – Jablunkov: remains of the first town in Hradek, late medieval buildings in Jablunkov – Fryštát.

III. The Hussite Route

Rybnik: battlefield – Jankowice Rybnickie: Corpus Christi Shrine – Cieszyn: City Museum – Štramperk: castle – Olomouc: Cathedral – Tabor: Hussite Museum.

IV. The Rail Routes of Cieszyn Silesia

Bielsko-Biala: train station – Cieszyn: train station, the Art Nouveau buildings of the old town – Frýdek-Místek main market square – Olomouc: main market square.

V. The Legends of Cieszyn Route

Cieszyn: Castle Hill, the well of the Three Brothers – Skoczów: main market square, the museum of St. John Sarkander – Strumień: old town – Chybie: ponds – Fryštát: the castle of knight Bełko – the slope of Czantoria: the legend of Złotogłowiec – Wędrynia: village centre – Frýdek-Místek: castle – Štramperk: the legend of the Tatar ears – Olomouc: old town.

VI. The Lutheran Route

Bielsko-Biala: Syjon – Cieszyn: old town – the slope of Równica – the slope of Czantoria – Frýdek-Místek: old town – Olomouc: museum.

VII. The Fortifications Route of Cieszyn Silesia

The vicinity of Bielsko and Jaworze (shelters from 1939) – Castle Grodziec – Castle Cieszyn – bastion system in Mosty u Jablunkova – reconstructed settlement of Gołężyców in Kocobędz – Štramberg Castle – the castle fortifications of Frýdek-Místek – Hukvaldy Castle (one of the largest in the Czech Republic) – Olomouc: castle and Romanesque rotunda.

VIII. The Handicraft Route

Koniaków (lace) – the vicinity of Mosty u Jablunkova (printing) – Chybie (basketry) – the vicinity of Štramberg (iron art, blacksmithing)

IX. The Żabi Kraj [Frog Country] Route

Cieszyn – ponds near Skoczów – the ponds of Strumień – Strumień (the capital of Żabi Kraj) – Chybie – Rybna (trout farming)

X. The Natural Attractions Route

The vicinity of Wiślica (Cieszynianka mineral water) – Cisownica – Three Villages on the Vistula River (capercaillie breeding centre) – the Beskids footpaths – ponds around Chybie (bird sanctuary) – Moravian Gate (museum in Ostrava) – Štramberg (nature and symbiosis with human beings).

The activities of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion in the field of environmental protection manifest primarily through direct use and management of the EU funds for small projects (Common Fund for Small Projects under Phare CBC Fund for the Micro-Projects of the Community Initiative INTERREG IIIA Czech Republic-Poland, Micro-Project Fund for Poland-Czech Republic Cross-Border Operational Programme 2007-2013). The small number of applications for the funding of projects related to environmental protection clearly demonstrates the weakness of the Polish-Czech cooperation in this field. The reasons for this situation are varied. These include: firstly, different environmental standards in force in the Czech Republic and Poland; secondly, the financial problems of local governments; thirdly, the lack of awareness of the importance of cooperation in the field of environmental protection among the representatives of local governments; fourthly, psychological barriers between the Czechs and the Poles; fifthly, the lack of coordination of environmental policies of local government units (difficulty in co-operation at different levels); sixthly, the need for crediting projects (funds go to the authors of the project after its completion), the fluctuations in the Euro exchange rate (if the grant is awarded in that currency), and the workload associated with the formal requirements of the allocation of resources from the EU funds, which are particularly burdensome for small entities (businesses, non-governmental organizations).

Micro-Projects do not enable major infrastructure investments, but there are a number of projects on a smaller scale that could be realized. The “soft” measures of this type include, for example: investments in small demonstration installations for renewable energy sources, conducting cross-border pollution monitoring pro-

grammes, and developing practices in the implementation of projects likely to have a negative impact on the environment of the neighbouring country. It seems, however, that the priority for Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion – increasing the effectiveness of the programmes developed by the institutional structures – should be advisory and training activities, as well as educational activities. With it, the following could be achieved: strengthening the environmental awareness of the population of the region, giving legitimacy to more active environmental policy, training of experts to carry out projects related to this field, dissemination of knowledge on environmental requirements and investment opportunities in this area among the representatives of public institutions.

The Polish and Czech institutional structures of Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion have played a positive role as the initiators and supporters of environmental projects. However, the weakness of the Polish-Czech cooperation is demonstrated in this field. The cooperation here is much more difficult than i.e. in the field of tourism. Therefore, the intensification of more autonomous actions by the authorities of the Euroregion is called for, which would strengthen the involvement of local actors (NGOs, businesses, educational institutions) in the implementation of environmental priorities.

As mentioned above, the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion has significant capacity to further enhance integration, but this potential is not always used correctly. Therefore, we present the authorities of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion with ten recommendations, which – we believe – could serve to deepen the existing cross-border cooperation in the Euroregion. First of all, the cooperation between economic entities should be intensified, as well as the cooperation in the field of entrepreneurship, crisis management, and planning. Strengthening of the interconnections and dependencies between the economies on both sides of the border (for which it would be necessary, however, to increase the number of economic entities in the Polish part of the Euroregion) would significantly broaden the regional common functional interests. Secondly, the authorities of the Euroregion should strive to do more in order to overcome the historical prejudices and stereotypes between the communities of the two parts of the Euroregion. This would create favourable conditions for further development of cross-border cooperation. Removing these barriers requires not only coordination between governments and the local governments, but also a shared commitment of social, political, and self-government forces in the region. Thirdly, the authorities of the Euroregion should do more to strengthen its promotion in both communities, because – according to our research – it is still little-known among the inhabitants of the Euroregion or poorly (if at all) associated with projects implemented there. Fourthly, the involvement of the Euroregion should be increased in the process of education on the local, regional cultural heritage; a coherent strategy should be developed for the protection of the said heritage. Fifthly, local authorities, social partners, teachers, and parents, as well as pupils and students themselves should undertake more conscious and planned educational activities at the school level in order to better explore the richness of cultural and religious borderlands communities, to develop real cross-border cooperation and the process of building an active society,

conscious of its common roots, differences, and similarities (e.g. through educational projects of the European Union – student exchange programmes, or the implementation of projects for cultural, social, and educational exploration). Sixthly, it is essential to deepen the knowledge of the regulations and notarial practices between legal professionals in both parts of the Euroregion. Seventhly, in order to strengthen the economic and social cohesion, the Euroregion should exploit the fact that the differences in the level of development of its two parts are much smaller than in the case of the entirety of both countries. Eighthly, the authorities of the Euroregion should actively support the development of transport and communication infrastructure (land, but especially air and rail), combining it with the expansion of hotel and catering facilities (including seasonal ones). Ninthly, continuing the so-far very successful projects of the authorities of the Euroregion concerning the development of tourism, it would be worthwhile to create new tourist routes. Therefore, we propose ten such potential routes: a) The Monuments of the Middle Ages Route in Cieszyn Silesia, b) The Medieval Cities Route of Cieszyn Silesia, c) The Hussite Route, d) The Rail Routes of Cieszyn Silesia, e) The Legends of Cieszyn Route, f) The Lutheran Route, g) The Fortifications Route of Cieszyn Silesia, h) The Handicraft Route, i) The Żabi Kraj [Frog Country] Route, j) The Natural Attractions Route. Tenthly, the authorities of the Euroregion should strongly intensify Polish-Czech cooperation in the field of environmental protection, for instance – through the implementation of a greater number of investment projects funded from the EU funds.

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